Hitler's Germany.

Hitler was determined to set up the 'Thousand-Year Reich' based on the ideas he had written about in *Mein Kampf*. His first step was to put an end to democracy in Germany and make himself dictator. He did this rapidly, ruthlessly, but legally.

Dictatorship.

Hitler's dictatorship was based on two acts.

THE ENABLING ACT.

Hitler forced the Reichstag to pass the Enabling Act. This was done by arresting or banning many members of opposition parties. By passing the Enabling Act, Hitler was dictator of Germany. The Act gave him the legal power to make laws without consulting the Reichstag.

ONE PARTY RULE.

The Nazi party became the only legal political party. Other parties were banned. Trade unions were abolished. Local government was put in the hands of Nazi party officials, and local elections were no longer held.

'The Night of the Long Knives.

Hitler still did not control the German army. It considered him to be an upstart and was suspicious of what he planned to do. The army was also worried about the Storm-troopers, the SA. The SA leader, Ernst Roehm, wanted to make the SA more powerful so that it would become a kind of second German army. The SA was now a force of four million men all trained in street fighting. Roehm's power rivalled that of Hitler himself. Hitler clearly had to make a choice between the army and the SA. By this time the SA were an embarrassment to him. Now he was safely in power he did not need these violent bullies. He was moving in the highest circles in German society and did not want to be reminded of his street fighting gangs. On the night of 29 June 1934, Hitler ordered his SS killers to act.

Hundreds of SA leaders, including Roehm and many other possible rivals, were swiftly murdered during the night. This was called 'The Night of the Long Knives'.

The S.S.

The s.a. was finished. The job had been done by the SS, the *Schutz Staffel*. These black-shirted units had been formed in 1926 as Hitler's personal body-guard. Now they increased in number and importance. Usually they were more middle class than the SA had been. Heinrich Himmler was their leader, but all SS men swore a personal oath of loyalty to Hitler. They could never be a threat to him like the SA.

Soon after the Night of the Long Knives, President Hindenburg died. Hitler took over the position of President as well as remaining as Chancelllor. The army swore an oath of loyalty to him as head of the German Reich.

LIFE IN NAZI Germany.

All aspects of life in Germany were now under Nazi control.

The German people read and heard only what the Nazis wanted them to read and hear. Dr Joseph Goebbels, the Minister of Propaganda, controlled the newspapers and the radio. Books by Jews or anti-Nazis were taken from schools and libraries. Huge bonfires were made of them in every town. The Nazis made sure cheap radios were available.

They told the German people only of Hitler's successes, who Germany's enemies were and how Hitler was dealing with them.

The slogan most often used by the Nazis was "One state, one people, one leader. Pictures of Hitler showed him as a strong man, as the saviour of Germany but also kind and looking after the children.

Women and children.

The Nazis said that women's equality was one of the bad influences of the Weimar Republic. They discouraged married women from working by giving money to those who gave up their jobs on getting married. Women were really only expected to stay at home, have children and look after their husbands.

The Nazis concentrated especially hard on propaganda for children. They saw them as the future citizens of the 'Thousand-year Reich'. They expected them to be physically tough but totally obedient.

In school the curriculum was carefully controlled. All lessons had a Nazi angle and teachers had to join the Nazi Teachers' Association. If they did not teach Nazi ideas pupils would report them to their parents and they would be sacked.

Opposition.

Those who dared to speak out against the Nazis put their lives at risk. Any kind of opposition to the Nazi state was considered to be treason. The *Gestapo* (the state secret police) had the right to arrest people merely on suspicion. They could imprison their suspects or execute them without trial. Neighbours, even families, spied on each other and reported private conversations.

Not all Germans accepted Hitler's dictatorship without question. Thousands of Germans fled, many to Britain and the USA.

The most spectacular of the army's efforts to oppose Hitler was the Bomb Plot of 1944, in which Hitler was injured but not killed.

Economic Life.

by 1937, after four years of Nazi rule, most ordinary Germans were satisfied with Hitler. In 1933, the economy had been in a poor state, with six million people unemployed. By 1937, unemployment was under one million. Hitler had reduced the figures partly by conscripting people into the Labour Corps, which worked on a number of Public Work Schemes all over Germany. Wages were low and hours were long. Workers protested, but with trade unions abolished there was little they could do about it. Employers prospered in these conditions.

Mainly, unemployment was reduced by expanding the German army, navy and air force and supplying them with equipment. From 1935, Hitler was preparing for war. Directly against the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, he ordered tanks, aeroplanes and ships to be built. This, of course, meant huge contracts for the iron and steel industries. German industry prospered and provided jobs. Inventors tried to find substitutes for imports. Imports were expensive and could be even harder to get in wartime.

Hitler's aim, which was never fully achieved, was self sufficiency, especially during the war.

He also ordered work to start on a cheap 'people's car', the Volkswagen.

With such an economic recovery, it is not surprising that many Germans were ready to go along with Hitler.

PERSECUTION OF THE JEWS.

the main victims of his attention were the Jews. His policy was to make life more and more difficult for the Jews. At first, Jewish shops were boycotted and Jews forbidden to inherit land. Then 'non-Aryan' were dismissed. In 1935, he passed the Nuremberg Laws.

1. 'Only a national of German or similar blood is a citizen of the Reich. A Jew is not a citizen of the Reich. He has no vote. He may not fill public office.
2. Marriage between Jews and nationals of German blood is forbidden.

Many Germans were arrested.

By 1939, they were forbidden to go to school or university. Soon the Gestapo began to round up Jews and send them to concentration camps such as Auschwitz.

In 1941, Hitler began the policy called the 'Final Solution'. This was an attempt to kill all the Jews in Europe. From Germany, Poland, France, Holland, Czechoslovakia, Russia and all the countries conquered by Hitler, Jews were transported to the concentration camps where they were to be killed.